

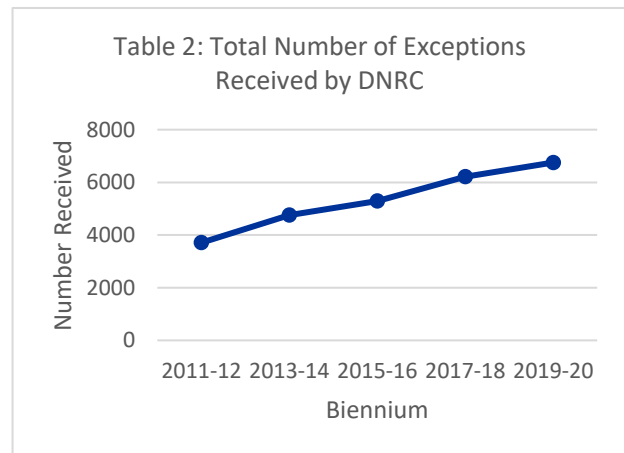
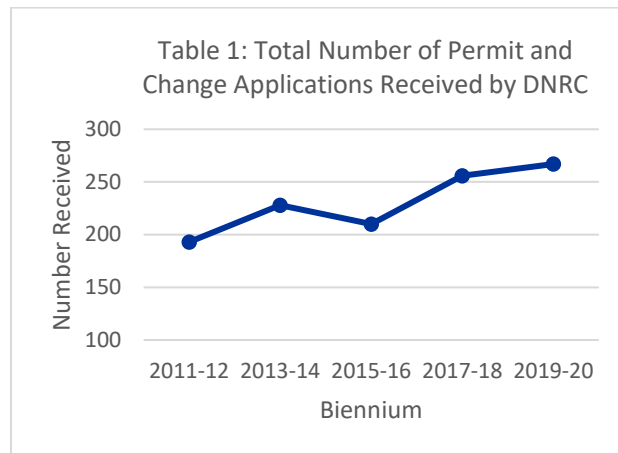


Water Right Application Processing Factsheet

Spring 2021 (data current through April 30, 2021)

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's (DNRC) Water Resources Division (WRD) is responsible for water right administration Statewide. Over the last decade, DNRC has seen a steady increase in water right filings, especially in the high growth regions across the State. The purpose of this factsheet is to provide data on the number of water right filings received and pending across the State to establish a baseline understanding that will inform the development of improvements to application processing times.

1. **Permits, Changes, and Exceptions: Statewide.** Over the last decade, filings for permit and change applications have increased on average five percent per year (Table 1), and permit exception filings have increased nearly eight percent annually during that same period (Table 2).



2. **Permit and Change Applications Received and Pending: Regional Trends.** Differing geographic and hydrologic conditions, changing demographics, and a variety of other factors statewide influence the number and types of water right applications filed across DNRC's eight [regions](#). For example, a greater variety of new permit application types are filed in basins open to new appropriations, while we see a greater number of complex change and combination permit-change applications with associated mitigation plans in [closed basins](#). The open-versus-closed basin dichotomy is only one factor influencing regional variation in the number and types of applications received and pending, and subsequent processing timelines. See Tables 3 and 4.

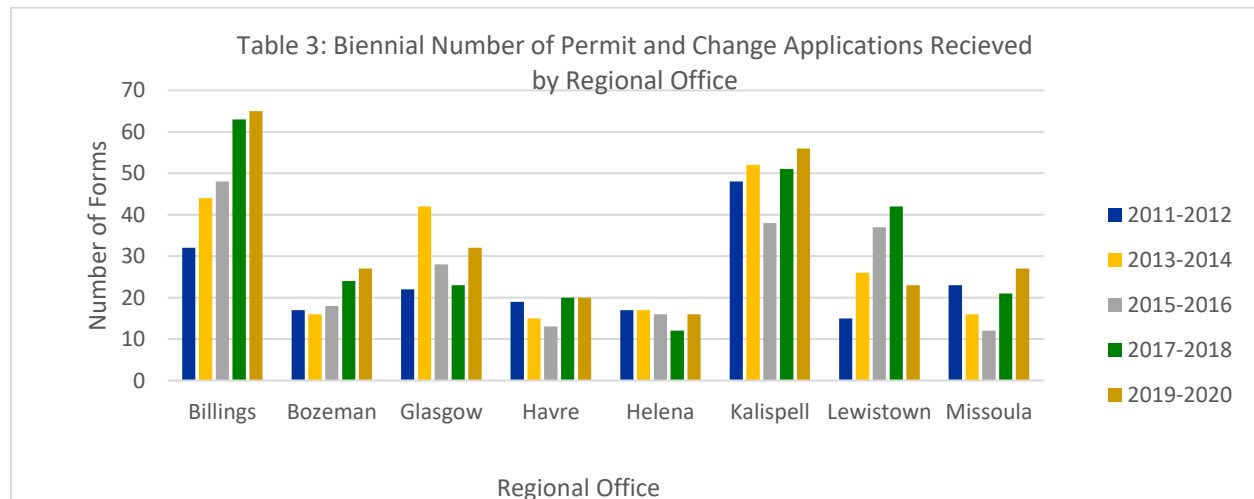
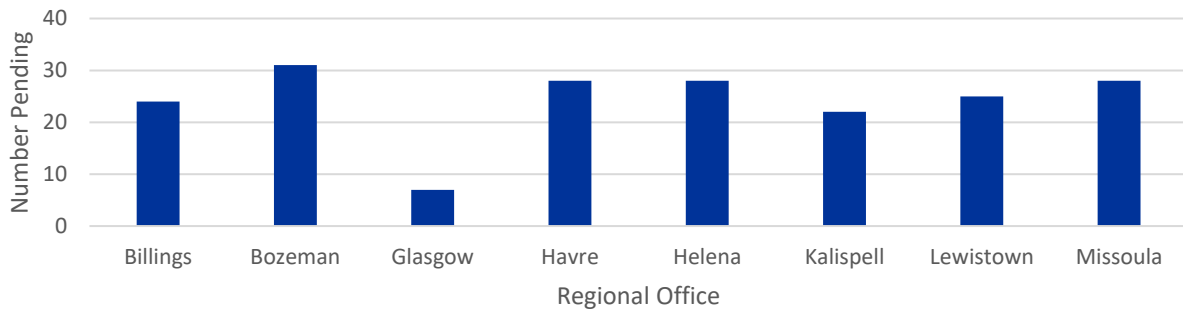
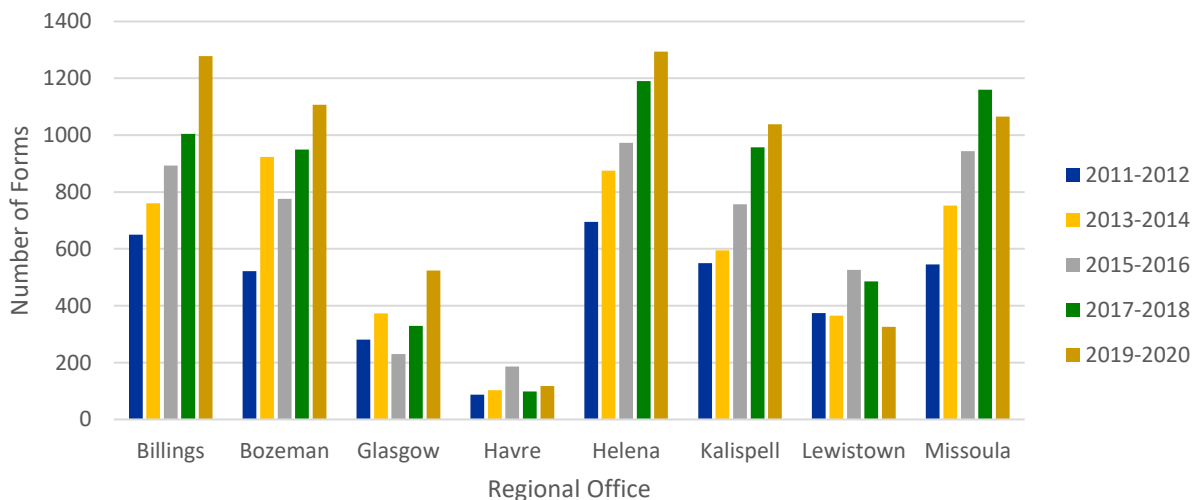


Table 4: Current Number of Pending Permits and Changes by Regional Office



3. **Permit Exceptions: Regional Trends.** The number of permit exceptions filed with DNRC has increased significantly over the past decade, generally coinciding with high growth areas and whether a basin is open or closed to new appropriations (Table 5). Beginning in late 2014, as a first step to better coordinate regulatory processes for new development, DNRC and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) created a process whereby landowners who were applying for a new subdivision of land would first engage with the DNRC to see what, if any, water right is required. The number of these water right pre-determination requests from DEQ has likewise increased due to the same factors.

Table 5: Biennial Number of Permit Exceptions Received by Regional Office



Next Steps

While these data are useful to inform DNRC and the public about trends in water right application filings across the State, they do not tell the full story. In the coming months, DNRC will continue to take a closer look to understand and evaluate the factors that influence processing times and work to identify solutions that will improve service to the people of Montana.

For more information and ways to stay engaged please visit: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/water>